

15 FAM 220 RENTAL BENCHMARK PROGRAM

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)
(Office of Origin: OBO)

15 FAM 221 PURPOSE

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

The Rental Benchmark Program (RBP), initially introduced as the Rental Benchmark Initiative (RBI), operates under the direction of the Office of Real Property *Leasing*, in the Directorate *for* Planning and Real Estate, in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (*OBO/PRE/RPL*). This program promotes the cost-effective *lease of* residential property and more efficient management of housing programs at overseas posts. All posts, *except those* with fewer than *ten operating* leased residential properties, unaccompanied posts, and posts without an established rental housing market, must participate in the RBP.

15 FAM 222 RENTAL BENCHMARKS

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

Rental benchmarks are set for all categories of housing at posts participating in the RBP. The rental benchmarks are developed in consultation with post, based on the current cost of *leases for* residential properties in post's existing housing inventory, rental market surveys provided by post, and analysis of local rental market information from independent sources. Rental benchmarks are reviewed by the Office of Real Property *Leasing* (*OBO/PRE/RPL*) in consultations with posts and can be adjusted to reflect increases or decreases in local-market rental rates.

15 FAM 223 RBP - POST AUTHORITY

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

- a. Under the RBP, OBO grants authority to post, for a period of 1-year (renewable), to sign *operating leases for* residential *properties*, without waiver approval for residences that meet all of the following:
 - (1) Fall within the approved residential rental benchmarks;
 - (2) Are within established space standards for the occupant; and
 - (3) Have rental rates under \$50,000 per year for the term of the lease.

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U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual Volume 15
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b. In addition, posts participating in the RBP must:

- (1) Maintain a current and accurate automated real property application (RPA) database; and
- (2) Provide required documentation to OBO regarding leasing of nonresidential and designated properties.

15 FAM 224 RBP - REQUIRED LEASE WAIVERS

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

Posts participating in the RBP must submit lease waivers by electronic lease waiver request (E-LWR) to OBO for:

- (1) All *leases for* residential *properties* that *exceed* approved rental benchmarks;
- (2) All housing assignments that exceed the maximum space standards allowed for the occupant, whether *the* assignment *is* to a *new lease or to a renewal lease*;
- (3) All residential leases that have an annual rent in excess of \$50,000;
- (4) All nonresidential leases regardless of cost; and
- (5) Leases for all designated residences regardless of cost.

15 FAM 225 RBP REVIEWS

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

OBO/PRE/RPL will conduct a periodic review of post compliance with the requirements of the Rental Benchmark Program (RBP), and the Office of Real Property *Leasing* (*OBO/PRE/RPL*) will extend post's authority for subsequent years, based on OBO review of post performance. Post must supply their real property application (RPA) data, keep that data current and accurate, comply with the requirement to submit documents in a timely manner, and submit lease waivers as required.

15 FAM 226 HOUSING INVENTORY

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

A post's housing inventory includes all U.S. Government-held residences, whether owned *or* leased. Where USAID manages its *own* housing program, USAID has a separate housing inventory.

15 FAM 227 HOUSING POOL

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

Each post must establish a housing pool with a mix of housing that will meet the long-term needs of personnel of varying ranks and family sizes. Longer retention of units will protect against spiraling lease costs, allow for amortization of make-ready or security upgrade costs, and provide for the availability of housing in limited markets.

15 FAM 228 HOUSING SELECTION

(CT:OBO-34; 10-18-2013)

- a. *Leased* housing should reflect *housing* space standards, post housing requirements, and rental benchmarks where established.
- b. To achieve maximum cost benefit to the U.S. Government, every effort should be made to *lease* appropriate housing *with terms that reflect the likelihood of the housing unit remaining in post's inventory, with lease terms* of 5 years or more *whenever appropriate*.
- c. In recognition of the factors in a host country which necessitate a U.S. Government leasing program, post management is authorized to retain leases on units which may be left vacant for short periods of time between transfers of employees (normally not to exceed 90 days without OBO prior approval), if it is deemed in the best interests of the U.S. Government (see 15 FAM 160 for funding).

15 FAM 229 UNASSIGNED